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General Audience

This morning's general audience took place at 9.30 in the Library of the Vatican Apostolic Palace.

In his address in Italian, the Pope continued his cycle of catechesis on the Beatitudes, focusing on the sixth: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (*Mt* 5: 8).

After summarising his catechesis in various languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the faithful. The general audience concluded with the recitation of the *Pater Noster*, and the Apostolic Blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today, together we read the sixth beatitude which promises the vision of God and has as a condition purity of heart.

One of the Psalms says: " 'Come,' says my heart, 'seek his face'; your face, Lord, do I seek! Do not hide your face from me" (27,8-9).

This language manifests the thirst for a personal relationship with God, not mechanical, not a bit nebulous, no: personal. Even the Book of Job expresses this as a sign of a sincere relationship. The Book of Job says: "By hearsay I had heard of you, but now my eye has seen you" (42:5). And very often I think that this is the path of life, in our relations with God. We know God by hearsay, but with our experience we go forward, forward, forward, and at the end we will know Him directly, if we are faithful.... And this is the maturity of the Spirit.

How do we arrive at this intimacy, of knowing God with one's eyes? We can think of the disciples of Emmaus, for example. The Lord Jesus is beside them, "but their eyes were prevented from recognising Him" (Lk 24:16). The

Lord opens their eyes at the end of the journey which culminates in the breaking of the bread and had been initiated with a reproof: "How foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!" (Lk 24:25). That is the reproof at the beginning. Here lies the origin of their blindness: their hearts were foolish and slow. And when the heart is foolish and slow, one does not see things. One sees things as though they were cloudy. Here lies the wisdom of this beatitude: to be able to contemplate it is necessary looking deep within our hearts and making space for God; as Saint Augustine put it: "You were more inward to me than my most inward part" (Confessions, III, 6, 11). To see God it's not necessary to change our glasses or the place from which we are looking, or to change the theological authors who teach us the way: our heart needs to be liberated from its own deceit. This is the only way.

When we realise that our worst enemy is often hidden within our own hearts, this is a decisive maturation process. The most noble battle is that against the interior deceptions generated by our sins. Because sins change our inner vision, they change our evaluation of things, they make us see things that are not true, or at least that are not quite so true.

It is, therefore, important to understand what "purity of heart" is. To understand this we need to recall that in the Bible, the heart does not consist solely in sentiments, but it is the most intimate place of the human being, the interior space where a person is him or herself. This, according to the Biblical mentality.

The same Gospel of Matthew says: "If the light in you is darkness, how great will the darkness be!" (6:23). This "light" is the gaze of the heart, its perspective, your synthesis, the point from which you read reality (cfr Ap. Exhort. *Evangelii gaudium*, 143).

But what does it mean to have a "pure" heart? The pure in heart live in the presence of the Lord, preserving in their hearts what is worthy of a relationship with Him; only in this way do they possess a "unified" life, linear, not winding but simple.

A purified heart is, therefore, the result of a process that implies a liberation and a renunciation. The pure of heart is not born thus, it has lived an interior simplification, learning to renounce evil in itself, thus, in the Bible it is called circumcision of the heart (cfr *Dt* 10,16; 30,6; *Ez* 44,9; *Jer* 4,4).

This interior purification implies the recognition of that part of the heart that is under the influence of evil - "You know Father, I feel this, I think this, I see this, and this is bad": recognising the ugly part, the part that is obfuscated by evil - to learn the art of letting oneself always be taught and guided by the Holy Spirit. The journey of the ailing heart, the sinning heart, the heart that no longer sees things well, because it is in sin, to the fullness of the light of the heart, is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is He Who guides us to fulfil this task. Thus, through this journey of the heart, we will reach the point of "seeing God".

In this *beatific vision*, there is a future, eschatological dimension, as with all the Beatitudes: it is the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven toward which we move. But there is also another dimension: to see God means discerning the designs of Providence in what happens, recognising His presence in the Sacraments, His presence in our brothers and sisters, above all the poor and suffering, and to recognise God where He manifests Himself (cf *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2519).

This beatitude is a fruit of the preceding one: if we have heard the thirst for the good that dwells within us and are aware of living in mercy, the path to liberation which lasts all of our lives has begun and leads all the way to heaven. It is serious work, a work which the Holy Spirit does if we give Him space to do so, if we are open to the action of the Holy Spirit. Therefore we can say that it is God's work in us - through the trials and purifications of life - and this work of God and of the Holy Spirit brings us to a great joy, a true peace. Let us not be afraid, let us open the doors of our heart to the Holy Spirit so that He might purify us and lead us forward in this journey towards full joy.

Greeting in English

I greet the English-speaking faithful joining us through the media, as we continue on our Lenten journey towards Easter. Upon you and your families, I invoke the strength and peace that come from our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you!
